

Washington, D.C. - Today, Congressman Joe Sestak inserted an official statement into the Congressional Record to honor the 60th anniversary of the founding of the state of Israel. The recorded statement follows this release as it was entered into the Record. — The Congressman, who visited Israel numerous times during his 31 years in the Navy, recently voted in support of H Con Res 322, a resolution that recognizes the historic significance of the 60th anniversary of the re-establishment of the sovereign and independent state of Israel as a homeland for the Jewish people. The measure reaffirms the bonds of friendship and cooperation which have existed between the United States and Israel for the past 60 years, and commits to strengthening those bonds.

In addition, the Congressman recently spoke of the historic importance of the relationship between the United States and Israel when he was a panelist for a discussion of foreign relations when the Jewish Federation of Greater Philadelphia held an Afternoon of Jewish Learning titled “Israel at 60.”

During that discussion, the Congressman noted that a safe and secure Israel is necessary not only for Israelis, but for the future of the democratic world. While serving as Director for Defense Policy under President Clinton, the Congressman helped to plan Operation RELIANT MERMAID, the first ever military exercise between Israel and a primarily Islamic country, Turkey. He noted that the operation granted him unique insight into the possibilities of where nations working together with United States leadership can lead to a more secure future. He also added that he hope to continue to work closely with both Israel and its military for lasting peace in the region.

Below is a copy of the Congressman’s remarks which were inserted into the Record:

*Madam Speaker,*

*I rise today to congratulate and honor Israel on the 60th anniversary of its founding – May 14th, 1948. Over the past 60 years, the United States and Israel have developed a close friendship based on our common democratic values and security interests. I strongly believe that it is in our nation’s best interest to further strengthen our relations with Israel and create a peaceful Middle East.*

*There are over 3,500 Holocaust survivors living in the Greater Philadelphia region, and many are in my district. These men and women serve as a constant reminder to me to the history and birth of this nation. I have been to Israel numerous times in the Navy, and I recently met with Israeli Ambassador to the United States, Salai Meridor, and Commander-in-Chief for the Israeli Navy, Eli Marom, to discuss how our countries' relationship can be developed further.*

*Our conversation touched on our nations' economic relationship: the United States is Israel's top trading partners, and American companies have significant investments in Israel's economy. I believe Congress has vested interest in continuing this economic relationship.*

*Furthermore, we discussed the state of Israeli's military as well as foreign affairs, from Iraq and the Global War on Terrorism to the close relationship between Israel and the United States and their militaries. I firmly believe our economies would mutually benefit including the potential of a joint venture between the United States and Israel, such as the development of Littoral Combat Ships.*

*Joint ventures would result in great mutual benefit by providing not only greater interoperability between American and Israeli militaries – while also driving down costs for procurement by working together – but would also greatly enhance the already strong relationship between these two countries.*

*More than our common bond of trade and security, however, our people share the common belief of Theodore Herzl, who once said "if you will it, it is no dream." A safe and secure Israel is necessary not only for the people of Israel, but for the future of the democratic world. I stand here to affirm my commitment to enhancing the relationship between our nations and to congratulate Israel on its 60th anniversary.*